



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**PATTERNS OF ELECTRONIC MAIL DISCOURSE IN TWO
MALAYSIAN ORGANISATIONS**

HADINA HABIL

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ORGANISATIONS**

By

HADINA HABIL

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

July 2003



This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Haji Habil b. Haji Abdul Hamid and Hajjah Maryam bt Haji Jamaluddin, who have believed in me and loved me unconditionally.

Your encouragement and support have made me who I am today.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Chairman: Associate Professor Shameem Rafik Khan, Ph.D.

Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication

This study investigates the patterns of email discourse in workplace communication. Email exchanges are analysed in order to explicate how members of an organisation interact through email to meet the specific communicative needs of the organisation. It is the assumption of this study that email discourse represents social action of members in the organisation and it is part of a social practice.

The linguistic data for the study consists of email texts and the study emulates the language in context model. The three parameters of the field, mode and tenor that constitute register, are investigated to provide insight on what the participants are engaged in, the people involve in the interaction and on the role the language plays.

The data is analysed in two parts: text-based features and text in context. The text-based features is further divided into two: the micro and macro analyses.

The macro analysis involves looking at the surface and content structure of email messages. This analysis provides information on the generic structure of email. The micro analysis involves eliciting empirical evidence from the corpus by using concordancing tools. A textual analysis is also carried out to draw the textual features and lexical choices and expressions used by writers in the emails.

The text in context constitutes the interpretation and explanation of the reason why and the explanation of how certain linguistic features are adopted in some situation, when communicating with certain people to achieve certain communicative purposes.

Examples of email messages are discussed and the various strategies are explained based on the linguistic data, and the social context in which the emails are written. Reference to the specific organisational culture and practices are formulated.

The evidence shows that in the context of workplace communication, the available linguistic resources are used creatively and purposively via email in meeting the specific communicative purposes of members of organisations. The social, political and cultural aspects of the interaction influence the way emails are written and email writers are consciously aware of the available resources.

The study concludes that people in organisation adopt various discourse and rhetorical strategies to meet the specific communicative needs at the workplace. The strategies selected reflect the writers' interpersonal relationship with their email interactants while the linguistic realisation in the email texts manifest the values they hold as members of the organisation. Finally, a model of factors influencing the construction of the email messages at the workplace and a taxonomy of the linguistic features and rhetorical strategies in email as an institutional genre are posited which provide a framework for future research in the field.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah.

**BENTUK WACANA MEL ELEKTRONIK DALAM DUA ORGANISASI DI
MALAYSIA**

Oleh

HADINA HABIL

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Kajian ini menganalisis bentuk-bentuk wacana komunikasi e-mel di tempat kerja. Interaksi saling berbalas e-mel dikaji untuk menghuraikan bagaimana ahli-ahli sebuah organisasi berinteraksi menerusi e-mel untuk memenuhi pelbagai keperluan komunikatif tertentu dalam sesebuah organisasi. Andaian yang dibuat oleh kajian ini adalah bahawa wacana e-mel menggambarkan tindakan sosial ahli-ahli dalam organisasi dan justeru, ia merupakan sebahagian daripada amalan sosial.

Data linguistik kajian ini merangkumi teks-teks e-mel dan kajian ini menggunakan model bahasa dalam konteks. Tiga parameter iaitu bidang, cara dan tenor yang membentuk laras, dikaji untuk menghasilkan dapatan tentang perkara apakah yang mempertaut para peserta, orang yang terlibat dalam interaksi dan peranan yang dimainkan oleh bahasa.

Data-data dianalisis dalam dua bahagian: ciri-ciri teks dan teks dalam konteks. Ciri-ciri teks seterusnya dibahagikan kepada dua: analisis mikro dan analisis makro.

Analisis makro melibatkan pemerhatian terhadap struktur permukaan dan kandungan mesej e-mel. Analisis ini memberikan maklumat tentang struktur generik e-mel tersebut. Analisis mikro pula menghasilkan bukti empirikal daripada korpus menerusi penggunaan instrumen konkordans. Analisis tekstual juga dilaksanakan untuk memperoleh ciri-ciri tekstual dan pilihan leksikal serta ungkapan-ungkapan yang digunakan oleh penulis-penulis dalam e-mel mereka.

Teks dalam konteks membentuk penafsiran dan penjelasan tentang sebab mengapa dan penjelasan bagaimana ciri-ciri linguistik tertentu digunakan dalam sesetengah situasi, apabila berkomunikasi dengan orang tertentu untuk mencapai objektif komunikatif tertentu.

Contoh-contoh mesej e-mel dibincangkan dan pelbagai bentuk strategi dihuraikan berdasarkan data linguistik dan konteks sosial e-mel tersebut ditulis. Rujukan terhadap budaya dan amalan organisasi tertentu juga dikemukakan.

Kajian ini membuktikan bahawa dalam konteks komunikasi di tempat kerja, maklumat dan sumber linguistik yang ada adalah digunakan secara kreatif dan penuh objektif menerusi e-mel untuk memenuhi matlamat komunikatif tertentu ahli-ahli organisasi. Aspek-aspek sosial, politik dan budaya dalam interaksi mempengaruhi cara e-mel ditulis dan penulis-penulis e-mel sedar dan tahu tentang maklumat dan sumber linguistik yang ada.

Kesimpulannya, kajian ini merumuskan bahawa para pekerja dalam organisasi menggunakan pelbagai strategi wacana dan retorik untuk memenuhi keperluan-keperluan komunikatif tertentu di tempat kerja. Strategi-strategi yang digunakan menggambarkan hubungan interpersonal para penulis e-mel dengan penginteraksi e-mel mereka, manakala realisasi linguistik dalam teks-teks e-mel menggambarkan nilai-nilai yang dipegang oleh mereka sebagai ahli organisasi. Akhir sekali, dicadangkan sebuah model tentang faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi sumbangan e-mel mesej di tempat kerja dan sebuah taksonomi bagi ciri-ciri linguistik serta strategi retorik dalam e-mel sebagai sebuah genre institusional yang membentuk sebuah rangka kerja bagi kajian seterusnya dalam bidang ini.

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I certify that an Examination Committee met on 3 July 2003 to conduct the final examination of Hadina Habil on her Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled "Patterns of Electronic Mail Discourse in Two Malaysian Organisations" in accordance with Universiti Putra Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Putra Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.



HADINA HABIL

Date: 29. 9. 2023

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